

2025: The Year of the Snake

The Year of the Snake begins on 29 January 2025. If you were born in 1917, 1929, 1941, 1953, 1965, 1977, 1989, 2001, 2013, or will be born between 29 January 2025 and 16 February 2026, you are and will be the Snake.

The Snake is the sixth of the 12-year cycle of animals in the Chinese zodiac. As the legend has it, the Jade Emperor called the race to create the zodiac and all animals were invited to participate for a chance to be featured in the zodiac system. The first 12 animals to cross the river and the finish line would earn a place in the lunar calendar and in the order they completed the race. The Rat by taking a ride on the back of the Ox completed the race first, because the Rat jumped ahead of the Ox at the finish line. The Pig, who needed to eat and take a few naps along the way, came the last. Hence the order of the 12-animal cycle is: Rat, Ox, Tiger, Rabbit, Dragon, Snake, Horse, Sheep, Monkey, Rooster, Dog, and Pig.

The Chinese zodiac and its variations are celebrated in many East Asian and Southeast Asian countries, such as Japan, South Korea, North Korea, Vietnam, Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, Nepal, Bhutan, Cambodia, and Thailand. In some parts of Thailand, the Pig is replaced with an elephant. In Vietnam, by replacing the Rabbit, the Cat finally secures a place in the zodiac.

In the zodiac system, the emphasis is on one's birth year rather than month. In Chinese, the zodiac system is called Sheng Xiao and also Shu Xiang, meaning "birth year" and "resemblance". It is believed that one's personality is related to the attributes of their zodiac animal.

The Snake is associated with wisdom, charm, elegance, and transformation. People born in the Year of the Snake are mysterious, charismatic, intuitive, calm, strategic, positive, wise, determined, intelligent, goal-oriented, responsible and graceful. They are deep thinkers, good at problem solving and excellent communicators, although they can also be indifferent, sceptical, possessive, and obstinate.

In Chinese culture and philosophy, the eternal Five Elements govern the phenomena occurring in the natural world. They are Fire, Wood, Metal, Water and Earth and they also affect the characteristic traits of the zodiac animals. This year, it is Wood, so Wood Snake are said to be precise, cool-headed, creative, and having logical thinking.

The Snake is also called “Little Dragon”, hence the Year of the “Little Dragon” refers to the Year of the Snake. That is because the Snake shares the appearance and mysterious qualities of the Dragon and it is believed that the mythical figure of the Dragon has originally been modelled on the Snake.

Best professions for those born in the Year of the Snake include artist, politician, teacher, painter, psychologist, public relations officer, TV presenter, scientist, magician, dietician, sociologist, AND social media influencer.

Apparently, (please choose to believe or not to believe), the Snake is most compatible with Rooster, Ox and Monkey, least compatible with Pig and Tiger.

Famous Snakes include: J F Kennedy, Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis, Audrey Hepburn, Muhammad Ali, Bob Dylan, Oprah Winfrey, Taylor Swift, Mia Wasikowska, J K Rowling, Babara Walters, Stephen Hawking, Dick Cheney, Tony Blair, Prince George, Emmanuel Macron, (the list goes on) and Volodymyr Zelensky who caught the tail of the Snake, being born on 25 January 1978 whilst the Year of the Snake ended on 27 January in 1978.

In China, Lunar New Year is also called the Spring Festival which marks the end of winter and the beginning of spring, the first season of the four-season cycle and beginning of a new year. The Spring Festival starts on the eve of the lunar new year and ends the 15th day of the first month, being known as the Lantern Festival. In 2025, the Lantern Festival will be on 12 February. On New Year’s Eve, traditionally families make dumplings and eat them at the strike of midnight to welcome prosperity for the new year, as the shape of dumplings resembles gold ingots.

The Lunar New Year is celebrated in many Asian countries and increasingly around the world, including Australia. The first recorded Chinese New Year celebration in Sydney was in 1862. The City of Sydney started to sponsor celebration of the Chinese New Year in 1996. In 2019 the name of the celebration was changed to The Lunar New Year to better reflect the increasingly multicultural society of Australia and to include all communities who celebrate the Lunar New Year. Since 2020 the annual celebration has been known as the Sydney Lunar Festival and become one of the largest celebrations of the Lunar New Year outside Asia and one of Sydney’s major annual arts festivals.

Professor Jing Han

Director, Institute for Australian and Chinese Arts and Culture, Western Sydney University